SPEECH

OF

W. GIBSON, M.P.

ON THE

CURRAN BRIDGE CONTRACT

HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA, TUESDAY, 18TH JUNE, 1895.

Mr. GIBSON. The hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat has undoubtedly made the best that could be made of the brief that has been given him. But it is evident that he has no practical knowledge of the work; for if he had, I am sure he would never have made the speech he has made. He denies the statement made that Mr. Hannaford offered to do this work. He should have consulted the evidence taken before the Public Accounts Committee, when he would have found that Mr. Hannaford stated under oath, which statement I have under my hand, that he offered to do this work. So that disposes of the hon. gentleman's case, so far as Mr. Hannaford is concerned.

Mr. HAGGART. The hon. gentleman is mistaken, there is not a word of truth in his statement.

Mr. GIBSON. If the hon. Minister will wait till I come to it——

Mr. HAGGART. But you made a statement which is not correct.

Mr. GIBSON. I will read the statement later if the hon. gentleman will have patience. Mr. Hannaford undertook to build the substructure of the Grand Trunk bridge for $35,000 and the superstructure for $35,000, in all $70,000. And, in the evidence taken before the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Hannaford stated that he was willing to supply a bridge containing 15,000 pounds more of iron than the bridge built by the Dominion Bridge Company, and now in use by the Government, including that in his $35,000 estimate. At page 272 of the evidence you will find the statement made by Mr. Hannaford:

Estimated cost of erecting a new swing bridge for Grand Trunk Railway traffic at Wellington Street—275 feet over all—square ends, say 600,000 pounds, including gearing at 4 cents, erected.....	$27,000
Painting, false works, wooden superstructure, engines and machinery and sundries	7,000
	$34,000
Raising approaches, paving, &c.....	5,000
	$39,000
Less by present bridge.....	4,000
	$35,000

Exclusive of masonry, crib-work piers and protections.

E. P. HANNAFORD,
Chief Engineer.

Montreal, 25th October, 1892.

And the other estimate reads:

Montreal—Lachine Canal bridge, Wellington Street for Grand Trunk Railway traffic, approximate estimate:

Abutments—two at 250 cubic yards, 500 cubic yards at $30.....	$15,000
Concrete, 300 cubic yards at $15.....	4,500
Excavation, 600 cubic yards, say.....	500
Timber for foundation.....	2,000
Crib-work for piling	9,000
Taking down two piers and sundry work	4,000
	$35,000

Summary—

Say, masonry, &c.....	$35,000
Superstructure	35,000
	$70,000

E. P. HANNAFORD,
Chief Engineer.

Montreal, 24th December, 1892.

Now, Mr. Hannaford was asked by Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, what was the depth of navigation, and Mr. Hannaford's answer was :

These estimates were made for 19 feet. That is Mr. Parent's plan.

The evidence goes on :

By Mr. Bergeron :

Q. Is that 19 feet navigation ?—A. 19 feet navigation. It was a Government plan.

By Mr. Gibson :

Q. So you arrived at that estimate from the Government plan, and you say that your estimate of $35,000 for masonry and $35,000 for superstructure, a total of $70,000, that when you made that estimate on behalf of the Grand Trunk Railway, you were satisfied there was a profit of $10,000 for the Grand Trunk Railway Company ?—A. I was satisfied there was, if the season was decent.

Q. And the work could be done under those circumstances, providing they gave you sufficient time to work, for $60,000 ?—A. Yes, $60,000 or $70,000. It could have been done for my estimate. I felt that my estimate was a very high one for the substructure.

Q. Now, Mr. Hannaford, supposing that you had been obliged to go four feet further down, how much would that have added to the cost of the substructure ?—A. Another 4 feet in addition to the 19, well, I should have had to do pumping and all that. Altogether, I should say $8,000.

Q. $8,000 additional to have taken down to the depth the Government took it down themselves ?—A. I don't know that, sir. You see the Government and any government would do the same. You don't want to have 22 feet to pump ; you want to sheer off a little. Nineteen feet is as much as would carry one of the Allan line vessels.

Q. Supposing the Government had decided, after you had taken the work, to have gone down to the 22 feet, you still think that you could have done it for $8,000 additional, and that the Grand Trunk would not have lost anything ?—A. I think, as the matter turned out ; I think that the whole thing could have been done for $70,000. I made up my mind, after the work was done, in May, 1893, that the work would have been done, and that we should have done it at a saving of $10,000.

So you see that although the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat, claimed that all this additional cost to the country was on account of the Government sinking the channel four feet deeper than was at first intended, here you have the evidence of Mr. Hannaford, who is quite competent to judge upon these facts, that so far as the Grand Trunk bridge was concerned, he was in a position as chief engineer to say that he would undertake the work for $8,000. And after he had seen the work done, he still says he could have done it for the $8,000 extra, and the country would have saved $10,000. My hon. friend to the left of me says it was a bigger bridge. Of course it was a bigger bridge. It weighed 15,000 pounds more, and was worth $6,000 more than the bridge the Government put in, and it was a bridge that was to be turned by steam, whereas the present bridge is turned by hand. Neither the present bridge nor the Wellington bridge are finished, and probably never will be. Now, my hon. friend spoke about the quantities that would be required on a large work of that kind, and the different kinds of material that would be required. Well, we have a statement made by Mr. Desbarats, who has been spoken of so highly to-day, that in the estimate made by him for the construction of these works, and he provided everything so far as he could foresee as an engineer. 550,000 feet board measure of all kinds of timber was all that was needed for that work. I would like that hon. gentleman, before he goes away, to explain to me how it comes about that according to the report of the Government's commissioners there was charged for 3,613,600 feet board measure, and the Government commissioners say in their report that there could have been used in that work only 2,594,800 feet board measure. Now, where are the 1,018,800 feet paid for and not used ?

Mr. HAGGART. Does the hon. gentleman say it was paid for ?

Mr. GIBSON. According to the Government's report. You will have a chance of explaining how much you paid for, and how much you have not paid for. There is one thing, however, that is clear. These men made up accounts for 3,600,000 feet of lumber, of which over a million feet cannot be found ; and it was given in evidence last year that 450 pieces of timber 12 inches by 12 inches, from 25 to 30 feet, were taken away or stolen in one night from the banks of the Lachine Canal, and has never been heard of since. I have not heard that the Minister of Railways nor the Solicitor General have been looking for the culprit who took that timber. The hon. gentleman spoke about tenders being applied for, and that all kinds of work were done under contract. Sir, the commissioners' report contradicts that statement to this extent. that $45,992.46 worth of timber was delivered and paid for that never was contracted for at all. That does not bear out the statement that everything was done under contract. You can see that in the report of the commissioners, page 11 :

A large amount, $45,992.46 worth, has been purchased without calling for tenders, and without demands or requisitions from either Mr. Parent or Mr. Kennedy.

Now, my hon. friend stated this afternoon that Mr. Kennedy was not in charge of the work. Sir, Mr. Kennedy was in charge of the work, as appears on page 327 of the evidence :

By Mr. Haggart :

Q. You went up to Ottawa ?—A. Yes.

Q. And why didn't you go to the department and make your complaint ?—A. Because I was stopped by Senator Drummond and Mr. Curran, and I said here on Friday that I was sorry often that I did not carry that out, and Senator Drummond expressed himself since that he was sorry I did not carry it out, which I hope the "Star" paper will put that in. If I had been discharged then, I should not have been in the position I am to-day. I should have been a free man.

If Mr. Kennedy was discharged, he must have been employed at one time or another, because on page 295 of the same evidence, we find :

Q. Would you kindly explain ; we want to have the truth, that is all we want ?—A. That is what I want to give, as far as possible. That interview was held between Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Ogilvie—Mr. Curran was also present—in Mr. Trudeau's office. What took place between them at the interview I don't know. Then Mr. Curran and Mr. Ogilvie came to me in an adjoining room, and Mr. Ogilvie informed me that Mr. Trudeau would be highly pleased if I would accept the appointment of overseer of the construction of the Wellington bridge. I said that I would, conditionally. He wanted to know what those conditions were, and I told him that the conditions should be, that if I was to be held responsible for the construction of the Wellington bridge, that I should have full charge, that is to say, having all the men employed directly under my charge, having full control of the men, the plant, material and everything else. That is to say, the placing of the plant in the proper place and having the material necessary to do the work. Mr. Ogilvie made the remark, "Never mind the conditions, it will be all right." I said, "It may be all right now. It is better to take precautions now. It will save trouble later on." Mr. Curran said, "Kennedy is right ; he should stipulate conditions, and they should be allowed him, or he should not take charge of the work ;" but Mr. Ogilvie overruled both Mr. Curran and I. He also stated that Mr. Trudeau did not see how Kennedy could be remunerated for taking such a position, which was outside his official duties, and they preferred doing it thus in order to ensure those interested in the waterways having double interest of getting it finished. I said I did not care anything about that.

That shows conclusively that the desire of these parties was not only to put Mr. Kennedy in a position of trust, but to put him over Mr. Parent, the engineer. It was quite evident throughout the whole investigation that Mr. Kennedy occupied the principal position, because he did what he pleased and carried out what he pleased, without consulting Mr. Desbarats or Mr. Parent in any way whatever. Then, my hon. friend spoke about the number of men employed. We were told that no one kept the time. That was evident. Thousands of hours were charged that were never put in. Some of the men were recommended, not for their fitness, but because of some political influence they could use in the neighbourhood of Montreal, where they lived, for we find that at one of the examinations conducted by Mr. Tarte, Mr. Kennedy said they were recommended by different parties, that quite a few were recommended by Mr. Ouimet, and that a number were put on, whether Mr. Desbarats or Mr. Parent required them or not, on the order of Mr. St. Louis himself. The Minister said there was no undertaking between Mr. St. Louis and himself regarding the change of pay made when employed by the Government and by the contractor, from $1.25 per day when in the Government employ to $1.50 when in the employ of Mr. St. Louis. I find in the evidence given by Mr. St. Louis, when under examination, he said :

Q. So that the official arrangement was, that all of these men could be paid $1.50, that you should get that for them ?—A. By an understanding with the Deputy Minister and Mr. Haggart, I was to get $1.50 a day for all labourers working with pick and shovel.

Four hundred men were employed by the Government at $1.25 per day, and these, the moment they were turned over to Mr. St. Louis, were considered to be worth $1.50 per day. The hon. member for Simcoe laid great stress upon the expense involved in removing ice from the canal basin. But it must be remembered that thousands of yards were removed unnecessarily, they were removed by horse and cart while machinery which was standing idle, although under pay, was on the work by which the ice could have been brought to the bank and the carts thus easily filled and they would have been able to take much larger loads than when filled at the prism of the canal. From the beginning to the end of this work there was nothing but extravagance. There was no order or system, and even no official time-keeper. The only time-keeper employed was one who was supposed to act for the Government, but he acted for Mr. St. Louis as well. In the matter of carting alone, we find that $12,700 were paid for which no work was done. The hon. member for Simcoe spoke about the Wellington Street bridge being a much larger structure than the Grand Trunk bridge. I tell the hon. gentleman that the Wellington Street bridge did not cost as large an amount, even though it is a more extensive work. Comparing labour hours charged to both bridges, from February 1st to May 6th, during which period the same class of work was executed, and during which period there was more than treble the work done upon the Wellington bridge :

Total hours of all labour, Wellington bridge	524,043
Total hours of all labour, Grand Trunk bridge	597,520
Total hours of stonecutters, Wellington bridge	50,063
Total hours of stonecutters, Grand Trunk bridge	57,190
Total hours of masons, Wellington bridge	12,070
Total hours of masons, Grand Trunk bridge	24,336
Total hours of skilled labour, Wellington bridge	107,747

Total hours of skilled labour, Grand Trunk bridge	142,258
Total hours of ordinary labour, Wellington bridge	278,253
Total hours of ordinary labour, Grand Trunk bridge	281,491
Total hours of single carters, Wellington bridge	46,358
Total hours of single carters, Grand Trunk bridge	75,940
Total hours of double carters, Wellington bridge	29,551
Total hours of double carters, Grand Trunk bridge	16,305

The overtime and night hours of the masons on the Wellington bridge is 28 per cent of the total hours charged; on the Grand Trunk bridge it is 48 per cent of the total hours charged. The night work of masons on the Wellington bridge terminated on the 1st of April; on the Grand Trunk it is charged until the 19th of April, while evidence shows that the masons worked at night at the commencement only of the laying of masonry on the Grand Trunk. An inducement to increase the night hours can be mentioned: the contractor paid the same wages for night as for day. The profit, according to the contractor's account, for a mason per day would be 82 cents, for the night $2, and if skilled and ordinary labourers are classed as masons, the profit would be much greater. For a rough comparison of cost, the total cubic yards of all classes of work built and removed on both bridges may be taken, and compare the cost of cartage relative to the work done on each bridge respectively. Although this comparison does not refer to the number of yards carted or to the actual cost of carting per cubic yard, still it answers the object in view. Upon the Wellington bridge the cost of cartage, per cubic yard, is approximately 78 cents, while on the Grand Trunk it is $1.80, or nearly 2½ times that on the Wellington. I might here say that, notwithstanding the fact that the whole of that stone could have been brought in by the Grand Trunk Railway from Terrebonne quarries, a distance of 22 miles, thereby saving the cost of teaming, simply because Mr. St. Louis could not make any profit out of railway transportation, he was given the privilege, or at all events assumed it, of carting the whole of the stone from these quarries. It was shown that $12,700 had been expended on teaming, when none of it was necessary. The evidence showed that teams were employed in the morning. A man came down with his team and entered his name as being at work for the day, then he went up town and resumed his regular avocation and returned on the following morning and entered his name again, and in this way the Government paid improperly thousands of dollars. The scandal eventually became so great that even political friends of hon. gentleman opposite called the Government's attention to it, and asked them to look into the facts, and then the Government were obliged to appoint a commission, and that commission, notwithstanding the fact that it was appointed by the Government, came to the conclusion that the work was carried on in a most extravagant manner, that carelessness was manifestly displayed in every department, that there was no practical supervision, that every man was allowed to do as he pleased, and men were put on where they were not required, that men were allowed to carry lumber from one side of the yard to the other and take it back the following day, that thousands of feet of lumber were brought from Henderson's yard at night without any supervision, and the only check exercised was that the men on the following day were asked who brought it down. In this way there was no practical check on the work, and the Government were obliged to accept the charges of the lumber dealers whether they were right or wrong. I cannot add anything to the report made by the Government's own commissioners. In conjunction with that I may say that this recklessness extended over all the other works upon the Lachine Canal. We found that these men were doing work for the mill-owners along the line of the canal; that timber was charged for in excessive quantities, and that in one case, a box drain was said to contain 356,000 feet of lumber, which was charged for, while the actual quantity in the work was less than 19,000 feet, board measure, or, to be more accurate, 18,714 feet. The commissioners say:

A large amount of plank has been charged to the "box drain," 356,081 feet, b.m., of this only 18,714 feet, b.m., was used in the work. It is shown from the evidence of Mr. T. H. Trihey, that, of the plank above mentioned, 220,000 feet, b.m., was never purchased or delivered, though the account for this quantity of timber is certified to by Mr. Kennedy and other canal employees. The lumber purchased consisted of some pine deals, pine timber, and a number of pieces of oak. Not being able to charge the quantity of oak purchased to the box drain, a portion of it was invoiced as pine, to an amount equivalent to that originally charged for the oak. The account was originally rendered as oak, and, at the request of the superintendent of the canal, was changed to pine.

In the account (A—1) there is charged 220,000 feet of pine plank, instead of 37,448 feet of oak which was delivered, and which is not yet used, and is a raft in the canal.

So far as appears from the evidence, only the value of timber actually sold to the department was paid for; there does not appear to have been any necessity for buying the oak in the autumn of 1892. Besides this transaction, there is charged to the box drain an account of Henderson Brothers for 48,942 feet, b.m., of plank, which was delivered subsequent to the date on which the repairs to the box drain were made, and consequently could not have gone into that work. This system of management might lead to the fraudulent manipulation of accounts.

The account made up for material and the work done amounts to $4,223.15; a much less sum, probably under $500, was expended upon the box drain, for which an appropriation of $5,000 had been voted.

I may say in this connection, that in the evidence of Mr. Desbarats, he states he ordered the following materials namely, bracing for piles, 44,160 feet, board measure; rear waling, 3,960 feet, board measure; oak waling, 19,167 feet. None of this timber was ever put on, and to-day the tops of the piles in the Lachine Canal is without waling, either outside or inside to protect the Government works from the vessels crowding against them. The Government, instead of claiming the work to have cost a certain sum of money, should have finished the work before they came to Parliament to state that it was complete. The work is not complete. We were to have a bridge opening and closing by electricity, but the day I went down there to examine it, instead of a motor being in use, I saw five or six men working at it, and taking five minutes to open it, and five minutes to close it. Instead of the work being of such a character that the Government of this country should feel proud of it, the Minister of Railways, his chief engineer, and every official of the department connected with it, ought to feel ashamed at leaving the work in such an unfinished condition. It does not speak well for the Minister or his chief engineer that they should squander $400,000 on these two bridges without having the decency to make the job complete. Unless I am greatly mistaken, it is as unfinished to-day as it was when the water was let into the Lachine Canal. I repeat, again, that this House ought to condemn the Minister and his department for allowing the work to remain in its present condition.